



Lord William Hague in conversation with the IBA's executive director, Mark Ellis

'Democracy is going backwards,' warns former UK foreign secretary Lord William Hague

By Ben Edwards

Democracy is in retreat globally as the world enters a new and dangerous chapter, according to former UK foreign secretary Lord William Hague.

In conversation with IBA executive director Mark Ellis at yesterday's lunchtime keynote interview, Hague, who is currently chancellor at the University of Oxford, sounded the alarm on democratic decline and the rise of leaders who are straying from and breaking institutional norms. "There are democracies that are turning into quasi-democracies and into autocracies, where the average voter can do nothing about getting rid of the leader of that country... and that's happening on the edges of Europe," said Hague. "[It] has really reversed into a new wave of autocracy, and the great problem here is the United States."

Hague, former leader of the Conservative Party who went on to serve as foreign secretary from 2010-14, said the US

has turned from a key architect of the international order into "an arsonist", adding that Ellis's assertion in yesterday's IBA Daily that institutions are holding in this environment may not last.

"They probably wouldn't hold 10 or 15 years of this," said Hague. "A lot of them can withstand one presidency, but the division is becoming very, very deep."

He added: "I don't want to get us too pessimistic, but we shouldn't understate the danger here. Democracy is going backwards at the moment."

Hague also branded the US's war with Iran a "gargantuan mistake" that has failed to achieve any of its military objectives other than the destruction of the original leadership, who have simply been replaced by even more hardline leaders. It also has to negotiate endlessly on the Strait of Hormuz and keep a vast military force there, while also leaving the US armed forces short of critical weaponry

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IBA 'backsliding' report identifies stark gap between rule of law principles and implementation

By Anne Gallagher

A global gap is emerging between the importance of independent and impartial courts and how they function in practice, according to a new study from the IBA.

The Rule of Law Backsliding Survey Report, based on a survey of 326 legal professionals across more than 64 countries, comes as the rule of law continues to deteriorate globally, declining in 68% of countries worldwide between 2024 and 2025. According to the World Justice Project 2025 Rule of Law Index, this is the eighth consecutive year in which more countries experienced deterioration than improvement.

"The most dangerous threat to the rule of law is not always its outright rejection, but the gradual normalisation of its compromise," said Tahera Mandviwala, a member of the IBA Rule of Law Forum's advisory board and managing partner of TDT Legal in India. Judicial independence is a particular concern. Although 54% agreed or strongly agreed that there was no inappropriate interference in the judicial process, 67% said government actors and 83% said political parties are threats to judicial independence. At the same time, the survey revealed a tension between perceptions of overall judicial impartiality and personal experience. While 75% considered their judiciary impartial overall, 48% personally witnessed or encountered judicial bias.

Respondents said professional legal bodies – including bar associations, bar councils and law societies – are an important safeguard for judicial independence. They can protect judicial independence, including by speaking out publicly on threats to the judiciary, engaging with lawmakers, monitoring threats and disciplinary actions against judges, and raising awareness of risks to judicial independence.

The report warns that accountability must also be carefully defined, noting that uncertainty over judicial accountability can create opportunities for undue interference with judicial independence.

"The legal profession has a unique responsibility to help ensure that the fundamental values of the rule of law remain robust, respected and effective in practice, across jurisdictions and over time; and this responsibility has never been more important," said Mandviwala, adding that the findings are a call to action for the legal profession.



Tahera Mandviwala

Continued from page 1

at a time of international tensions, emboldening Russia and the Houthis and militias in Iraq, he said. "It's a pretty disastrous foreign policy move," Hague added.

On Russia's war in Ukraine and the US's waning support, Hague said European countries have done a very good job so far of filling that vacuum. "There hasn't been new American funding to support Ukraine now for quite a long time, but the EU and the UK have really stepped into that gap," Hague said. "So the funds have continued to flow and so has available ammunition and military supplies. Clearly, that's going to come under its greatest ever strain in the coming winter," with Russia expected to intensify its efforts to disrupt Ukraine's economy and its people through "massive drone attacks and missile attacks".

Hague said European leaders needed to maintain their support for Ukraine because if Russia was to win, the cost to European countries

with the vast flow of refugees and the huge defence expenditure entailed afterwards would be "far greater than the cost of giving more support to Ukraine now".

While the world is entering a dangerous period, Hague said it was also entering an exciting chapter with the advance of artificial intelligence, which – aside from the risks – represented "tremendous opportunity" for countries to break out of economic stagnation.

"To enjoy any of the economic advantages, you have to be a swift adopter of AI," said Hague. "There's just no choice about that any more than you could choose whether to adopt electricity 100 years ago. You're going to get totally left out if you don't."

He added: "We are on the brink of extraordinary medical and scientific advances in nuclear fusion and all sorts of things, and we won't get to them without AI."

Have you seen a red beret?

An Australian delegate has lost a red beret of great sentimental value. It was inside a conference bag that was stored in the cloakroom on Sunday. The owner was accidentally handed another delegate's bag when she left that evening. If anyone has come across the beret, please hand it in to the conference help desk in Foyer 6 or email confs@int-bar.org.

The Future of Legal Services Commission issues a call to action to help map legal challenges

By John Crabb

The IBA's Future of Legal Services Commission is compiling a detailed heatmap of the issues currently facing the legal profession. Now in its fourth year, the global survey is an annual snapshot of the state of the legal profession, providing both a geographical spread of what issues are of greatest concern in different jurisdictions and a general indicator of the rising temperature of those global concerns.

On Monday, the commission led a session that introduced this year's iteration of the global heatmap and called those in attendance to complete the survey ahead of publication later in the year. A variety of speakers gave presentations on how some of the anticipated challenges facing the wider industry are impacting their practice and home jurisdictions.

One of those panellists, Christopher Howard of BARBRI Global in London and co-vice chair of the Future of Legal Services Commission, stressed the importance of the work of the commission and the need for the heatmap.

He said the IBA "can't make a strategic change or make plans without data to support those plans or without a trajectory based on evidence". He added: "One of the purposes of the Future of Legal Services Commission is to inform the committees that do such great work across a number of different disciplines".

As it evolves, the heatmap will allow the commission to provide the IBA's committees with extensive datasets about lawyers' concerns and how they are evolving over time. The heatmap survey is put together to reflect the most central themes of concern to lawyers, people, clients, business and the rule of law.

A change to this year's survey sees it only ask questions that examine the short- and medium-term outlook. "The world is moving so fast that predicting 10 years hence is almost impossible," said Howard.

The committee wants to hear from lawyers, legal academics, students, business service professionals and legal technologists, in order to have the most diverse and wide-ranging dataset possible. Although the data will be most useful for IBA members, the survey is also open to respondents outside of the organisation.

The Future of Legal Services Commission itself was set up in order to have an ongoing body within the IBA that is focused on the future, and specifically on topics that might otherwise be overlooked by other committees.

"There are lots of projects that are looking at lots of subjects, but the thing that gets you is the one you didn't think of," said commission co-chair Stephen Bowman. "And that's the mission of the Future of Legal Services Commission: to think about the white space that hasn't been identified yet."

"The heatmap is a critical part of what we do, and it's important to think of it not as something you're doing for us as a commission, but something you're doing for yourself and for the profession."

Bowman added: "If the data is robust then it won't be just something for a few people in the commission to deal with, but for every committee. Every bar and lawyer who's interested will be able to see where that data takes them and what it reveals. Often, it's those comparisons between group, cohort and subgroup data that is most illuminating and tells you something about your own bar or region."

Information about how to take this year's survey can be found by following the QR code below.



Future of Legal Services Commission Global Heatmap Survey 2026

A survey report on the key issues facing the legal profession

Contribute to the Heatmap here:

Ensure your voice is heard throughout the legal profession



‘A whole generation has grown up with war’

The IBA Human Rights Institute showcase highlights the impact of conflict on children and asks whether the international legal system can do more to protect children’s rights



Judge Theodor Meron discusses Russia’s ‘forcible transfers’ of Ukrainian children, as moderator Baroness Kennedy and panellist Hamza Al-Kateab look on

When Russian forces annexed Crimea back in 2014, Ukrainian-born Hanna was just seven years old. Now 18, Hanna has grown up under the long shadow of conflict, impacting every aspect of her life. Speaking of her experience at the IBA Human Rights Institute’s showcase on Monday afternoon, she said: “Always my childhood has been affected by war. Now I live and study in Kyiv. Kyiv is attacked almost every day, both at night and during the day. We hear explosions and go to shelters. Honestly, I’m very tired of living like this.”

Hanna is currently working as a youth advocate and adviser at the Office for Children and Youth under Ukraine’s Ministry of Social Policy. In that role, she has led humanitarian initiatives in areas where the situation is even worse for some children, such as in the city of Oleshky in Ukraine’s Kherson region. “It is under occupation, around 2000 people are there, including children,” Hanna said. “People do not have enough food, water, electricity and medicine. Some people are forced to eat grass to eat at least something. They cannot simply leave. And when humanitarian help comes, it may be stopped or taken away.”

Denys is 16 and continues to live in a frontline-affected area. Like Hanna, he is also a member of Save the Children Ukraine’s Child Rights Champions and Youth Ambassadors group, while also advocating for meaningful youth participation in decision-making as a member of Ukraine’s National Youth Council. “A whole generation has grown up with war, and we have learned to adapt,” he told the audience. “We study, we walk, we meet with friends and make our plans. But somewhere in our heads is a small question: ‘What if something happens?’ And we know where there is an air-raid shelter, or what we

should do when we hear the air-raid alarm.” He added: “Young people abroad will also think: ‘What do I want to do this weekend?’ But this question for us is always followed by: ‘Will I stay safe?’”

Hanna and Denys’s stories underscore why the United Nations in June said that violence against children in war reached devastating new levels last year, raising questions about children’s rights and whether international legal frameworks are doing enough to protect them.

This was the focus of Monday’s session, developed by IBA honorary life president Almudena Arpón de Mendiál Aldama and Save the Children, and moderated by Baroness Helena Kennedy KC, executive director of the IBA Human Rights Institute. The session featured a host of guest speakers who have experienced the impact of war on children, including Hanna and Denys’s first-hand testimony of growing up amid conflict. The session also heard from speakers on other violations of children’s rights, such as climate change, child marriage and sexual violence, examining why children’s rights are being increasingly attacked and why perpetrators are seemingly allowed to walk away. “My dream is to have a world where children’s rights will be protected, and I’m not thinking about a number of generations ahead, let’s do it in three years,” said Almudena Arpón de Mendiál Aldama, adding: “We have the rules. We have the institutions. We need a further collective push, and we need more accountability in order to make it real.”

That accountability is a pertinent topic for journalist and human rights activist Steve Crawshaw, whose recent book ‘Prosecuting the Powerful’ delves into this subject. In a keynote address, Crawshaw noted that the words of Save the Children co-founder Eglantyne Jebb that every war

is a war against children are as true now as they were 100 years ago. He said that brazen crimes against children continue, not just in distant conflicts, but here in Europe. “[Russian] president Vladimir Putin and his children’s commissioner Maria Lvova-Belova felt able just a few years ago to publicly boast about abducting Ukrainian children,” Crawshaw said. “They held an astonishing televised conversation in which they praised the removal of children from their homes, and then their subsequent indoctrination. They presented abductions, clearly illegal under international law, as a humanitarian act.” It was a shameless admission, he added, but it has had consequences. “Until recently, an international arrest warrant for a world leader would have seemed a political step far too great to take,” said Crawshaw. “In 2023, however, as we all know, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants against Putin and against Lvova-Belova under the applicable paragraphs of the Rome Statute. In other words, there is a warrant for the president of a permanent member of the UN Security Council. How unthinkable that would have seemed just a few short years ago.” His hope is that Putin’s arrest warrant could open the door to future accountability and send a lesson across the world.

Panel speaker Judge Theodor Meron is a Holocaust survivor and former president of international war crimes tribunals. Meron was an adviser on international humanitarian law to ICC chief prosecutor Karim Khan on the ‘forcible transfers’ of Ukrainian children to Russia, which would be a violation of the Geneva Conventions. “Repeated efforts to have Russia return the deported Ukrainian children to Ukraine and reunited with their families, incurring efforts so bravely led by Baroness Kennedy, have alas been only partially successful, prolonging the anger and the tragedy of their families,” he said.

Also among the panellists was Syrian doctor Hamza Al-Kateab. He was working in Aleppo during the four years of conflict there, managing the last remaining hospital in the city after nine other hospitals had been bombed by the Russian and Syrian regimes. Parents, he said, would rather treat their sick children at home because they thought it would be safer than being in a hospital. During the siege of Aleppo, he also recounted a story of how a friend from the International Committee of the Red Cross had brought a banana for his daughter Sama through the checkpoint because no fresh fruit was available at that time. “She had never tasted a banana before,” he said. “We gave her some. She loved it, and later we found her taking the banana peel out of the rubbish and sucking it, trying to get more of that taste. It’s still difficult to talk about that, thinking that I was a doctor trying to keep other people’s children alive, and my own daughter was searching through the rubbish for a taste of a fruit. That is one small memory of what siege does to childhood.”



Keynote speaker: human rights activist Steve Crawshaw

Shahd Sabir, a child protection specialist who had been working with Save the Children Sudan before the current conflict in the country, became a recipient of humanitarian aid. One day after she was forcibly displaced from Khartoum in April 2023, along with her one-and-a-half-year-old daughter, her daughter became sick. There was no nearby health centre, so she had to travel to another locality. When she arrived, she saw a Save the Children vehicle, and she immediately broke down in tears. “Working for many years as a humanitarian worker, trying to provide humanitarian assistance to conflict-affected children and their families, now I’m not a humanitarian worker anymore, I’m on the end line, I’m displaced myself, seeking medical support for my children,” she recounted. “It was then when I realised that sometimes it’s not only about getting the humanitarian assistance, it’s having a sense of reassurance and the feeling that you’re not facing this alone, there’s always a hope, and there are always people that are here to support you.”

Kennedy, whose work with the IBAHRI has sought to shine a spotlight on some of the world’s most extreme human rights abuses, added that storytelling about the horrors of war and its impact on children was vital for raising awareness. “We need to take those stories out into the world and let people know the kind of real and terrible suffering and long-term consequences of these experiences for people,” she said.

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Delegate Views

What are the most pressing legal issues in your country?
Interviews by Anne Gallagher

Dadimos Haile

Managing Partner
Dadimos & Partners
Ethiopia



In Ethiopia, we are experiencing significant regulatory change. For example, new legislation has been introduced requiring companies to make advance payments on income tax. The change came as a surprise, and companies now need to prepare for its impact.

Betina Schlossberg

Founder
Schlossberg Legal
US



Many of our freedoms are being attacked, chief among them the freedom of speech and freedom of open education. As lawyers we are the voice of people's rights and we are being targeted for trying to protect those rights.

Sarah Lau

Head of Asia Pacific
and Greater China
Irwin Mitchell
UK



The UK has national security and investment laws that require the government to authorise deals across 17 sectors that are deemed sensitive like defence, semiconductors and advanced materials. This creates a barrier to foreign direct investment. These processes need to be streamlined.

Cristina Sancho Ferrán

Corporate Affairs
Director
Aranzadi La Ley
Spain



The top three issues in Spain are political radicalisation, overregulation and AI ethics. An additional challenge is finding reliable sources of information so that we can develop informed opinions on issues important to our people and our country.

Claudio Matute

Founding Partner
IMAD Abogados
Chile



In Chile, our new right-wing government has changed the whole regulatory framework. That means that we are in a time of uncertainty. For example, the government just passed a new mega-reform that will change tax, environmental and infrastructure matters.

Anthony Asiimwe

Vice President
Uganda Law Society
Uganda



The president of our bar association is in exile for speaking out over human rights abuses. Our government's executive branch is threatening lawyers, and access to justice and due process are at risk. We must look to regional and international solutions to safeguard the legal profession.

Saranya Mishra

Principal Associate
Khaitan & Co
India



In India, there is the law, there is compliance with the law and then there is governance. People wrongly think that compliance and governance are the same. A company can be compliant, but not well governed. Companies must take voluntary action and introduce their own codes of governance.

Kamilah Kasim

Partner
RDS Law Partners
Malaysia



Malaysia has too many data centres. By 2030, they will consume at least one-third of our electricity. Our development requires electricity and this forces us to make choices, which may be fossil fuel over solar or other options. At the end of the day, there will always be new technologies and we must adapt.

Jem Francelle Sanico

Legal Counsel
Department of Information
and Communications
Technology
Philippines



Right now, there is an ongoing impeachment of our vice-president, so we are dealing with issues of graft and corruption. We also have environmental issues such as climate change, including super El Niño: when it rains, it floods, and there are flood control issues.

Dia Forrester

Head of Chambers
Forrester Legal Chambers
Grenada



A key challenge for Grenada is finding its place in the geopolitical climate. As a small island developing state, we do not have the natural resources to put us in a position of strength to bargain with other countries. We must react, but have no say in the decisions of global powers.

David Chodikoff

Partner
Miller Thomson
Canada



As a tax lawyer, I believe it is important for us to improve the competitive nature of our tax laws to encourage global business and greater internal national development. Canada is a vibrant country with extraordinary opportunities for investment and growth. My job is to make this happen.

Womba Silumbu-Kankondo

Managing Partner
Sil & Kay Advocates
Zambia



Following Zambia's 2021 commercial and institutional loan default, it has been managing itself out of debt. This is affecting the social needs of our citizens. We need to reform our legal framework to strengthen our financial system and debt-borrowing function.

The (legal) insiders' guide to Copenhagen

Local IBA delegates share their favourite places to eat, explore and unwind in the Danish capital Interviews by Anne Gallagher



Nyhavn

Editorial credit: Kirk Fisher / Shutterstock.com

Peter E. Stassen
Partner
Plesner



Beyond Noma, Alchemist and other headliners, Copenhagen is full of hidden gems. Try Restaurant Alf, Bar Vin or Restaurant Vie – or head to Restaurant Møntergade for the city's best traditional Danish lunch.

Cecilie Hermansen
Partner
Bech-Bruun



Whenever I have visitors in Copenhagen, I tell them to explore the city by bike. It's the perfect way to take a break from a busy schedule. Within minutes, you can reach the beaches of Amager Strand or the natural landscapes of Amager Fælled. If you have more time, cycle north to Bellevue and Dyrehaven. Few capital cities combine urban life and nature as seamlessly as Copenhagen.

Jesper Langemark
Partner
Bird & Bird



If I had to choose one hidden gem in Copenhagen, it would be Værnedamsvej. Tucked between Vesterbro and Frederiksberg, this charming little street feels like a small slice of Paris in the middle of the city. The street is lively without being crowded, and there is always something happening, whether people are enjoying a glass of wine on a sunny afternoon or gathering for dinner in one of the many cosy restaurants. It is the kind of place where you can spend hours strolling, people-watching and discovering new favourites.



People and shops on Værnedamsvej in Vesterbro district

Credit: Alexanderstock23 / Shutterstock.com

Ruth Caddock Hansen
Partner
HortenDahl



The National Gallery can hardly be described as hidden, but it is definitely a gem and somewhere I love to dash inside for a respite. Whilst the building itself is beautiful, the magic happens inside. If you're lucky, you'll find yourself in front of a P.S. Krøyer painting and suddenly remember why it is a wonderful thing to be alive.

Dr Rasmus Wandall
Owner
Wandall Law Firm



Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek has a winter garden with a wonderful lunch restaurant and a top-of-the-line museum. Also, in the centre of Copenhagen, inside the courtyard of the shop Beau Marché, Ny Østergade 32, there is a small restaurant which is perfect for small dinners and lunches. It's a small part of Paris in the middle of Copenhagen. Want to take a half day off? Go to one of the best modern museums anywhere, Louisiana in Humlebæk. Look it up. No disappointment guaranteed.

Cecile Nelsen
Head of Rule of Law Department
Danish Bar and Law Society



akmē is a fabulous place which just received a Michelin Star. Two young chefs provide a fusion between French and Japanese cuisine. It's not complicated; it's great food, great wine and a spectacular atmosphere.

Tahmina Salik
Founder
Empowerment for Her



I recommend Nyhavn. It's a very cosy place with shops and restaurants in the city centre along the water. If you keep walking along the street, you'll come to a very peaceful space, where you can sit by the water. It's the perfect mix of people on the street and quiet reflection.



The historic windmill Kastelsmøllen at Kastellet

Credit: cgst26 / Shutterstock.com



Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek Winter Garden

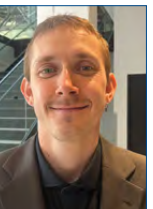
Editorial credit: Radiokafka / Shutterstock.com

Zohreh Faizi
Defence attorney
Strauss og Garlik Law Firm



Visitors should go to Frederiksberg. It is a combination of cute restaurants and green space. It's near the Copenhagen Business School and the vibe is very chill. You can go for a coffee or a walk or sit in the nearby park. There are also huge houses on the side streets to see.

Jeppe Borg Høj
Event coordinator
Idea Nordic



Definitely visit the Museum of Copenhagen because it's nice to know the history of the place you are visiting. Everyone – visitors and locals – can learn something new here about the history of Denmark. Also visit the old Meatpacking District. Now, it's hip restaurants and shops with cool conceptual shops, restaurants and clubs.

Cecilie Sletskov-Hjorth
Partner
NJORD Law Firm



Visit Kastellet; it's a very beautiful place to walk, not too far from the Little Mermaid. It is the most beautiful place in Copenhagen for walks or for running. For eating, Bistro Boheme, Levi and Esmee – they all have great food, great service.



Bike standing at sea shore, Amager beach, Denmark

Credit: Anwarul Kabir Photo / Shutterstock.com



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'It's not just about women reaching senior positions in law firms; it's about them having influence'

By Anne Gallagher

Women don't reach the top of law firms simply by being excellent lawyers; they need to build influence, relationships and business, ask for opportunities, find sponsors – and work within institutions willing to make the path to leadership genuinely accessible.

These were some of the takeaways from Monday's panel discussion, 'What does it take for more women to reach leadership positions in law firms'. Facilitated by Adeola Sunmola, partner at Udo Udoma & Belo-Osagie in Nigeria, she explained that the IBA's women's committee has seen progress in women's advancement in law firms since it was formed in 1996 but that today "it's not just about women reaching senior positions in law firms; it's about them having influence and power to make decisions".

The goal, she said, is for law firms to make practical changes for women to be equally represented at the top where influence and power is exercised. Those changes include a variety of areas such as law firm culture and structure, access to training, mentorship and sponsorship support, and succession planning initiatives. Most of all, a woman's journey to leadership will involve what panellist Lise Lotte Hjerrild called "push and pull". Standing back and thinking someone will figure your career out for you won't work. Instead, relationships, trust and visibility are a woman's professional capital.

"Being an excellent lawyer isn't enough," said Hjerrild, senior partner at Hortendahl in Copenhagen, the firm's first woman partner, an IBA management board member and co-chair of the IBA Copenhagen organising committee. "Women need internal relationships with partners, external client relationships, networking and a visible reputation." She shared a lesson she learned from a career coach, called the coffee cup trick: "You fill your cup with coffee and then go to a partner's office and ask about their weekend, how their kids are doing, if they enjoyed the football game." Initially she thought this effort was a waste of time but stuck with it, eventually building trust and strong



L-R Adeola Sunmola, Akila Agrawal, Lise Lotte Hjerrild, Ezra Davids, Sandra Reed, Claudia Barrero

internal relationships within her firm. "I thought it was good enough for me to be good at my work," she said. "I was blind."

South African firm Bowmans' chairman and managing partner Ezra Davids confirmed the importance of building internal credibility. "Leadership in law firms is unique in that your credibility goes a long way in buying you goodwill among your fellow partners and the rest of the firm," said Davids. "To progress, you need to be intentional." That intentionality is also critical in identifying new talent and supporting them.

"It's our responsibility as leaders to establish the credibility of new talent, take them to meetings and ensure they have maximum exposure to all the opportunities within the firm," Davids added. "Once that person attains [credibility], only then can they have power within the firm."

Panellists Claudia Barrero of Philippi Prietocarrizosa Ferrero DU & Uría, Sandra Reed of Pérez Bustamante & Ponce and Akila Agrawal at Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas spoke to issues of business development and self-promotion as leadership skills, and how culture and flexibility still shape women's path to leadership. To advance, Barrero said, a woman lawyer has to be relevant: "Bring new ideas, new people and help the firm make new partners."

IBA Human Rights Law Committee hosts screening of Eternal Sentinel documentary

By Anne Gallagher

The IBA's Human Rights Law Committee will today host a screening of Paris-based Iranian director Maryam Ashrafi's documentary film *Eternal Sentinel*.

The film follows Ashrafi as she meets journalists who have been wounded or witnessed deadly incidents involving landmines and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) in Iraq and Syria. Through personal stories – including her own trauma – *Eternal Sentinel* highlights the urgent issue of landmines and IEDs, which claimed the lives of 31 journalists in Iraq and 14 in Syria between 2000 and 2022. The film opens a conversation on the mental health challenges journalists face working in conflict zones, while also highlighting the long-term consequences of war and the persistent threat of landmines and IEDs. Despite ISIS's defeat in Syria and Iraq, these incidents have risen tenfold, claiming the lives of countless civilians, including children.

Born in Tehran, Ashrafi's passion for sociology led her to pursue work on social and socio-political issues across the world. She has focused on refugees in Paris, the mobilisation of the Kurdish and Iranian diasporas, the Indignant Movement in Paris, as well as riots in Paris following different social and political issues around the world.

The screening opens with a drinks and canapés reception. Following the film, a panel discussion and Q&A will feature leading practitioners in international human rights law and humanitarian assistance and protection. Panellists include Ashrafi; Verity Coyle, deputy director in the Human Rights Watch's crisis, conflict and arms division; Graeme Ogilvie, humanitarian deminer and DanChurchAid country director for Libya and Lebanon; and Ambassador Stephen Rapp (ret.), chair of the Commission for International Justice and Accountability.

Attendance is free, however advance registration is required. Email: askn@dca.dk. Doors open at 1900 at DanChurchAid (Folkekirken Nødhjælp), Meldahlsvej 3, 1613 Copenhagen V, and welcome remarks begin at 1930.

THE GLOBAL LEGAL POST

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IBA 2026 Copenhagen

Key sessions to look out for during a week that will set the agenda for global law at the Bella Center from 4-9 October



August 2018: Pope Francis meets Taoiseach Leo Varadkar in Dublin

Credit: Simon Roughneen / Shutterstock.com

Wednesday

0930 - 1045

The future of LGBTQI+ rights in a changing world

B6 1, Level 0

Chaired by Mark Stephens CBE, IBA Human Rights Institute co-chair, the first of two major interviews on Wednesday will be with former Taoiseach of Ireland Leo Varadkar. Holding office on two occasions as Ireland's youngest and first out gay prime minister, Varadkar will engage the audience on his views on how LGBTQI+ rights are evolving within an ever-changing society, bringing his political insight and individual experience to the crucial topic.

He published his memoir, *Speaking My Mind*, in September 2025, reflecting on his political career and personal journey. He subsequently spent the 2025–26 academic year as a senior fellow in Harvard Kennedy School's Global LGBTQI+ Human Rights Program, where he led a project examining the future of LGBTQI+ rights in the European Union. He told *The Guardian* earlier this year that advances in LGBTQI+ rights in Europe made over recent decades could no longer be taken for granted. "I think maybe 10 years ago we were a little bit naive. We just thought that the tide of history was going one way, and every year we would see more countries liberalising their laws or at least ending criminalisation," he said. "But I think we were maybe a bit naive to think that progress was inevitable, because it isn't. And it can be reversible as well."

1315 - 1415

A conversation on Ukraine with... Andriy Kostin, Anton Korynevych and Thomas Lund-Sørensen

Auditorium 15, Level 1

Wednesday's lunchtime conversation brings together three figures with first-hand experience of the legal and diplomatic response to Russia's war in Ukraine. Led by IBA executive director Mark Ellis, the discussion will feature Andriy Kostin, Ukraine's ambassador to the Netherlands and former Prosecutor General, who made pursuing accountability for alleged international crimes committed during the conflict a key priority during his time in office. He will be joined by Anton Korynevych, Director of the Directorate General for International Law and Legal Counteraction to Aggression at Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who has represented Ukraine in proceedings

against Russia before international courts and tribunals. Completing the panel is Denmark's ambassador to Ukraine, Thomas Lund-Sørensen, a veteran diplomat who has also served as Denmark's ambassador to Jordan and special envoy to Libya, and spent almost a decade heading the Danish government's Centre for Cyber Security.

1430 - 1730

BIC Showcase - beyond the lawyers: why rule of law matters to civil society

B2 1+3, Level 0

This is not just another IBA symposium about the rule of law. This is the Bar Issues Commission (BIC) and IBA Legal Policy & Research Unit's symposium on why the rule of law matters to civil society and what bar associations need to do to ensure that they play a more prominent role in promoting it. As the rule of law comes under attack, the IBA takes the position that it is up to bar associations around the world to leverage their unique positioning between the public and government to continue education and help encourage greater understanding of how civics and the rule of law align. The session will be chaired by BIC officer Claudia Amore of Camara de Servicios Legales in Colombia and BIC chair Steven Richman of the American Bar Association in Washington DC, alongside several prominent private practice lawyers. Split into two parts, the first will focus on the economic and historical importance of the rule of law, while the second will be an interactive workshop with the audience.

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Andriy Kostin speaking at the IBA annual conference in Paris in 2023

IBA 2026 Copenhagen

Continued from page 13

1800 - 2100

Host Committee Reception

Copenhagen City Hall, Rådhuspladsen, 1

The 2026 Copenhagen Host Committee, bringing together leading Danish law firms, the Danish Bar and Law Society, and the Association of Danish Law Firms, warmly invites delegates to an evening of networking. Copenhagen City Hall is one of Denmark's most recognisable landmarks and a symbol of Danish democracy, craftsmanship and civic tradition. Located in the heart of the city, it provides a fitting setting to welcome the international legal community to Copenhagen.

For security reasons, capacity at Copenhagen City Hall is limited to 600 people at any one time. There may therefore be a short wait to enter the building during busy periods. Registration is not required, but a conference badge is required to pass through security.

19:00 - 22:00

Eternal Sentinel: landmines and their enduring impact on civilians – film screening and dialogue

DanChurchAid, Meldahlsgrade 3, 1613 Copenhagen V

Presented by the IBA Human Rights Law Committee, with the support of DanChurchAid, the IBA's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI) and a range of IBA committees and bodies.

A special screening of Eternal Sentinel, a documentary directed by Maryam Ashrafi examining the use of landmines and

improvised explosive devices and their impact on children, journalists and other civilians. The screening will be followed by a panel discussion and Q&A, moderated by Baroness Helena Kennedy KC, director, IBAHRI, and Mark Stephens CBE, IBAHRI co-chair.

The event is complimentary but advance registration is required. Email: askn@dca.dk.

Thursday

0800 - 0915

Section on Public and Professional Interest (SPPI) awards breakfast

C1 0, Level 0

The annual SPPI awards breakfast will recognise three lawyers for their contributions to human rights, access to justice and the profession. Singapore's Charmaine Yap will receive the IBA Outstanding Young Lawyer Award for her commitment to using the law in the service of justice for vulnerable communities, alongside her professional and academic achievements.

Zar Li Aye, a lawyer and human rights defender from Myanmar's Chin Indigenous Community, will receive the IBA Award for Outstanding Contribution by a Legal Practitioner to Human Rights for her work defending human rights, improving access to justice for marginalised groups and pursuing systemic legal reform.

Nigerian public interest lawyer Yusuf Temilola Nurudeen will receive the IBA Pro Bono Award in recognition of his sustained commitment to pro bono legal work and improving access to justice in Nigeria.

0930 - 1230

SPPI Showcase: A profession under pressure

B5 1-5, Level 0

The IBA has long championed the importance of the rule of law, but now, perhaps more than ever, it is under intense threat from aggressors. On Thursday morning, the Section on Public and Professional Interest led showcase on a profession under pressure will deconstruct how the legal sector is under constant pressure from all angles, from regulators to artificial intelligence to the erosion of ethical boundaries. Promising to cover how practitioners are managing strain from courtrooms to conflict zones and from boardrooms to government ministries, the session will focus on the difficulties facing those defending the rule of law. A world café round table discussion will precede a panel discussion led by SPPI chair Babatunde Ajibade of SPA Ajibade & Co, Lagos, Nigeria, and SPPI vice chair and treasurer Hanim Hamzah of King & Wood, Beijing, China.

Friday

0930-1545

Rule of Law Symposium

Auditorium 11, Level 1

Organised by the Rule of Law Forum, the annual conference-ending symposium underscores the IBA's commitment to promoting and defending the rule of law worldwide. This year's programme will feature three sessions titled: International peace and global security in a multi-polar world; Not just the rule of law, but a just rule of law; and Lawfare and lawfair in the age of populism. The three sessions will convene leading practitioners, policymakers and academics to debate the challenges facing the rule of law on the global scale and reaffirm the legal profession's vital role in upholding justice and accountability. The symposium, which includes lunch, is free to attend, including for those who are not registered to attend the conference, although they must register by Wednesday 7 October. The online registration form can be found at ibanet.org.

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&Angell

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وانجل



Our IBA Team:

Back row (l to r): Mevan Bandara, Shahram Safai, Saurbh Kothari, Chatura Randeniya

Front row (l to r): Bashir Ahmed, Charles Laubach, Danielle Lobo

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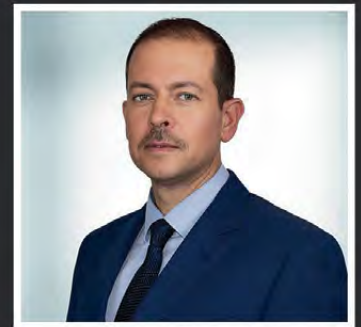
Meet our IBA Team



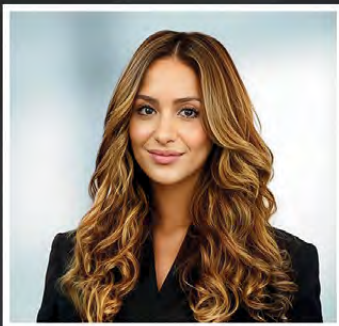
Sadiq Jafar
Managing Partner



Richard Briggs
Executive Partner, Dubai



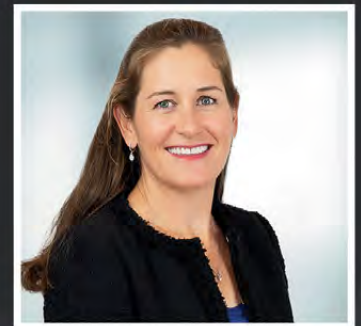
Yasser Omar
Executive Partner, Abu Dhabi



Dina Mahdi
Partner | Regulatory & Government Advisory



Walid Azzam
Partner | Dispute Resolution



Catriona McDevitt
Partner | Banking & Finance



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